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### Montana PBS documentary examines alternative school industry

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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Sept. 11, 2006

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### **MONTANA PBS DOCUMENTARY EXAMINES ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL INDUSTRY**

**MISSOULA —**

Montana PBS will explore the alternative school industry in a new television documentary premiering at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 14, on Montana PBS.

During the last decade, nearly 30 private alternative schools for troubled youth have sprung up in Montana. Some schools charge more than Ivy League colleges, and industry lobbyists estimate the programs gross \$40 million in the state annually. However, many Montanans have no idea this rapidly growing industry exists -- especially since the schools operate without any state licensing requirements. Yet some programs already have been the subject of serious abuse and neglect allegations.

The new Montana PBS documentary "Who's Watching the Kids?" looks at the alternative school industry in Montana and nationwide. The investigative piece focuses on the issue of regulation and relies heavily on documents and court records to reveal a side of the industry that few in the public ever hear about.

"Who's Watching the Kids?" also examines the connection between Montana's largest

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alternative school and a network of private schools that have been the subject of closures and child abuse investigations in the United States and abroad.

Documentary participants include Montana child welfare officials; state lawmakers; California Congressman George Miller, who has proposed nationwide legislation to regulate private schools; law enforcement personnel; and officials from the alternative school industry.

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**NOTE:** A state board set up to look at the possibility of licensing and regulating the Montana Alternative School Industry is scheduled to release its findings and recommendations Tuesday, Sept. 12. Also, details about a press-only screening of the program on Tuesday, Sept. 12, or press review copies of the documentary are available by calling 406-243-4101

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